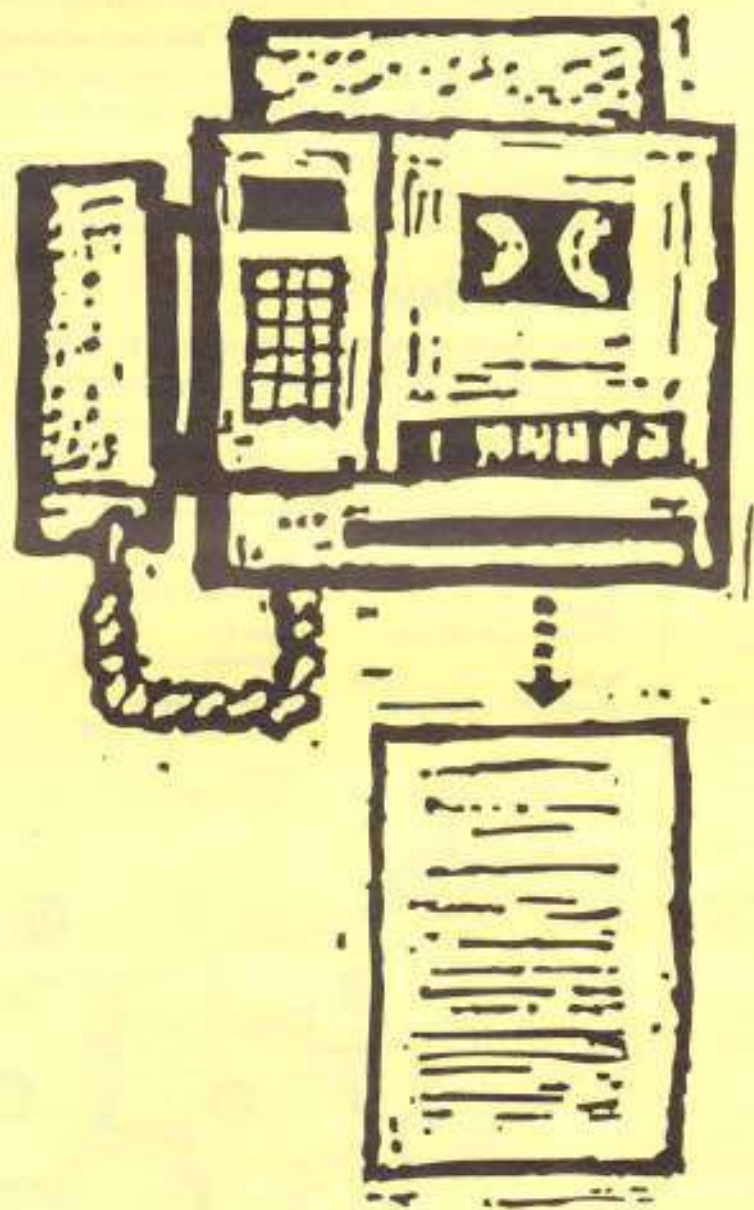


March 1998 Vol. 22, No. 2

CONNECTION

The Journal of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc.



THE STORIES COME IN ...

SDA KINSHIP INTERNATIONAL, INC.

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Who we are...

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. is a support group which ministers to the spiritual, emotional, social, and physical well being of Seventh-day Adventist lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and their families and friends.

SDA Kinship facilitates and promotes the understanding and affirmation of homosexual and bisexual Adventists among themselves and within the Seventh-day Adventist community through education, advocacy, and reconciliation.

Founded in 1976, the nonprofit organization was incorporated in 1981 and has a board of 15 officers and 10 regional coordinators. The current list of members and friends includes well over a thousand people in 16 countries.

SDA Kinship believes the Bible does not condemn, or even mention, homosexuality as a sexual orientation. Ellen G. White does not parallel any of the Bible texts, which are often used to condemn homosexuals. Most of the anguish imposed upon God's children who grow up gay or lesbian has its roots in a misunderstanding of what the Bible says.

Kinship operates solely on contributions from its members and friends.

SDA Kinship supports the advancement of human rights for all people.

Support Kinship

Kinship depends on you. Kinship is supported solely by contributions. Help us reach out to more gay Adventists by making a tax-deductible donation to SDA Kinship International. Please send your check or money order to the address below. SDA Kinship, P.O. Box 7320, Laguna Niguel, CA 92677, (714) 248-1299.

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Pseudonyms: Walt Elias, Donald Freeman, Jan Radcliffe, Lee Stover, and possibly others.

CONNECTION readers

What do they want?

COMPILED BY WALT ELIAS FROM KAMPMEETING QUESTIONNAIRES

Last summer at Kampmeeting a questionnaire was distributed which asked what Kinship members wished to see in the CONNECTION. Here is a summary of the results:

1. More personal stories (40%)
2. Pictures, graphics (15%)
3. More religious articles
4. Less religious articles
5. Articles for atheists
6. More personal input from varied people.
7. News
8. Places where people live with layouts, decoration
9. Longer articles
10. Reviews of films and books
11. More about people in regions
12. Empty space

You will note that "more personal stories" were requested by 40% of the people who responded to the questionnaire. This issue is a direct result of those requests. Because this was an open essay type question, it is significant that so many should request the same thing.

Story Issue

What coming out is to me

BY JOHN WIELAND

This issue features a number of articles dealing with "coming out." At Kampmeeting each year, such stories play an especially meaningful part.

John Wieland is in charge of Informational Services for Kinship

My memory of coming out invariably focuses on two events from many years ago, neither of them actually having to do with what most consider the coming out processes. The first—the yardstick against which I measure my progress—occurred under a street light in West Hollywood. A close friend and president-at-the-time of Kinship was visiting from New York. After dinner as we were standing on the side walk saying good-bys he gave me a very natural hug. I reactively stiffened up as if preparing for a vaccination.

Was I fearful of being seen hugging another male? In public? Afraid he'd make a pass at me? Afraid he wouldn't make a pass?

I had grown up in the mission field with the traditional Adventist values: kneel in church, go to Prayer Meeting, sell magazines. And never, ever learn about sex. Oh, and feel guilty about "Self Abuse".

Then, during medical school, I realize that I had a crush on another male I was working with in Sabbath School. This brought both the elation of realizing what being in love was all about and the despair at realizing that I was one of "them". Trouble was that I was so well insulated that I didn't know what "them" was.

Being the good little Adventist Scientist Boy I proceeded to study the topic: library books, medical articles, *The Advocate*, even *In Touch*. When I was aware of what homosexuality was, I then proceeded to study the Biblical issues: the KJV, NEV, EGW, John Boswell, even the Greek (I had wasted time taking a theology major at Pacific Union College).

I then marched out into the gay world and was more lonely then I ever had been. The gay world had no place for an old (32), homely gay boy. Especially one with a huge chip on his shoulder. I walked through card shops reading love poems wishing I had someone to send them to. I secretly envied the

teenagers I was treating for venereal diseases because at least they were getting some sex. I got in emotional fights with friends because they had boy friends and I didn't.

Then Bob dared to hug me under the street light, and I nearly freaked out.

Thank God my attitude has changed. Actually I can't thank God: He/She had nothing to do with it. I thank a friend. I wish I could say that it was Prozac that made me feel better, or that I was in counseling and developed this deep self-awareness. But it was a wonderful nurse, Lonnie, who said "You're nice, your butt's cute, let's have sex." And it wasn't shallow and meaningless. That first time was an intensely satisfying sharing of sensations and emotions. Each sex act since, with whomever, has also been. (Why would anyone have a need to voluntarily be celibate?)

I went out to Studio One or to Kinship meetings and was amazed at how much more friendly the world had become. Men would actually talk with me; they would actually date me. Amazing how one day could change the world!

Why is it that the wisdom of self acceptance and the intricacies of sex and dating cannot be passed from generation to generation? Humans have been doing and struggling with these things for thousands of years. Why does each generation, each person have to learn for him/herself the hard way? Now at least, there is much better gay and lesbian awareness in the world and in even the Church. Would that there could be less guilt. Would that each person could naturally learn his/her own self-worth.

Now I am older and more homely than ever. But also more at peace and more happy than ever. Yes a lot of it is due to an affectionate cat, Tabatha and a wonderful lover, Michael. I'm worthwhile not because I'm with Michael but just because of myself. I'm OK. That, to me is the Coming Out. ▼

There is perhaps nothing so strong as a "story" to present our cause. In this issue, as per your request, we present the "stories" of several Kinship members.

TRANSITIONS

BY LEE TODD

This story isn't really about my life, rather it's about transitions: First, from a fast paced professional life as a senior executive at the General Motors headquarters in New York and Detroit to retirement in a rural mountain area of California; Second, from being almost totally alienated from church to having the church as a central part of my life; and Third, from being a closeted gay activist to being totally open and known as a gay man in my community.

A bit of background for those who don't know me — I grew up in an SDA home and attended SDA schools through my first three years of college. I realized I was gay shortly after I graduated from academy, but I married when I was not quite 21, and about ten months later became a father. My wife and I parted amicably after five years. At about the same time as the divorce, I was disfellowshipped by the SDA church. I did not experience the anguish over that action which many Kinship members have felt. I just got on with my life. I was fairly comfortable without a church relationship.

Fast forward to 1991. With my "early out" retirement approaching, my partner, David, and I started making plans to leave our home near Detroit and relocate to a tiny mountain village in the California Sierras. We knew nothing about the community except what we had seen on a couple of visits to my mother who had lived there for over 25 years. We didn't learn until after moving here that the community is solidly Republican and conservative, even the Presbyterian and Episcopal churches here are extremely fundamentalist. Nevertheless, we bought a 5 acre building site with magnificent views of the snow-

capped high Sierras across the valley, and below us the village of Oakhurst. Our first clue about the community should have come when the realtor suggested that only my name appear on the offer to purchase. She said that David's name could be added at closing. No problem there, but we should have wondered why.

A year later, my retirement became effective, we arranged to lease a house near our property, packed our possessions into the largest moving van we had ever seen and set out for California. By now you may be thinking our relocation was a disaster. Not true. It has worked out extremely well, but we've had some interesting encounters and adventures over the past 5 and 1/2 years. So this is really a success story which illustrates how two gay men from the city can make it in a conservative rural community.

From the beginning, we made no attempt to conceal our relationship from any of the numerous contractors and tradespeople we encountered in the process of building a home. We always referred to each other as "my partner" and allowed them to draw whatever conclusion they wished from the fact that we owned the property and home together. Surprisingly, we encountered only one minor instance of overt homophobia: A wallpaper installer who had been recommended to us, came out to look at the job and gave us a price; however, when we called her to say we were ready for her work, she made an excuse that she was very busy and couldn't do the job for at least 6 months. Later we heard from a gay friend whose mother lives near the wallpaper hanger that her husband had forbidden her to do the job for the two gay men.

There were some instances of good natured kidding from some of the builders, e.g., the general contractor's son told our closest neighbors that he was going to paint the interior of the house Fairy Dust (that really is the name on one of the paint color samples!). Our neighbors, by the way, have turned out to be wonderful friends. The wife has a gay brother and they send us an anniversary card each year.

Soon after arriving in the community, we read a notice in the weekly newspaper that the Mountain Organists Club would be meeting the following Sunday. Since both David and I are organists we called the number and were informed where the meeting was to be held and that there would be a potluck following the meeting. David made a beautiful apple pie and off we went. We sensed a bit of puzzlement on our arrival, but no unfriendliness. We were invited to come again the next month and (apparently unaware of David's baking skills) it was suggested we bring bread or rolls to the next meeting. We did go and we did bring rolls. Of course, they weren't from the supermarket bakery. There were two kinds of home made yeast-raised rolls. After that, no one ever suggested that "the guys" bring something easy.

At one of the organ club meetings, David and I played a piano and organ duet and another member who was a church organist asked if we would come and play special music some Sunday at her church. We agreed and met her at the church to try out the instruments. While we were at the church, we met the pastor, Paul Redmond. He was very cordial, but I said afterward to David "there's a red-necked fundamentalist preacher if ever I saw one".

We also looked up the nearest chapter of PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) soon after our arrival in California. Through PFLAG we met a

See "Transitions" on page 9

"More personal stories," ... "more personal stuff," "more individual stories," This was the common theme of what people would especially like to see in the CONNECTION.

A Sexual History

BY RON LAWSON

Ron has been
involved in Kinship
since its beginning
and was Church
Liaison for many
years.

That should have grabbed your attention! Actually, our editor has asked for an expanded coming out story. We'll see where the expansion takes me.

I was born in Sydney, Australia, and we moved to a pineapple farm in Queensland when I was 6, and then to Toowoomba, a provincial "city" of 40,000, when I was 11. That was because Dad allowed himself to be talked into becoming a literature evangelist. This was but one sign that I grew up in the bosom of the church. Dad seemed to be elected elder wherever we went, and he was on the conference executive committee for years, and Mum (Australian for "Mom") had taught in Adventist colleges in India and Australia before

category of people who felt as I did and what they were called, and I also had some enjoyable lessons on what they did together. Indeed, so much did we enjoy what we did that we continued doing it throughout the youth camp—discreetly, after lights out. I should mention that he was only 3 years older than me. (My seducer went on to marry, become a pastor, and is now a union president in Australia. He offended me greatly, given our history, by writing to the presidents of Avondale College and the conferences in his union before my research visit to Australia and New Zealand in 1986 telling them to be careful of me because I was a "gay activist.")

I was still very naive on the subject, but determined to do something about it. I guess that I showed my academic bent, for I first turned to the library. For several months when I was 15 I traveled with Dad to Brisbane, the state capital,

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I was ... pleased at last to discover that there was a whole category of people who felt as I did.

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marriage. We also had a relative in high places in the church hierarchy.

Puberty hit at 12, I shot up to a skinny 6 ft, and I started noticing guys. Confusing, since they all seemed to be noticing and talking about the girls.

The Christmas before I turned 14 I went, as usual, to the junior camp run by the conference, but this time, since I was so "mature", was allowed to stay on for the youth camp that followed. A fellow I had known at a church while we were on the farm was a counselor at the junior camp. When the youngsters went home, he moved into the dorm for the youth camp, which was to begin the next day, and invited me to move to a bed next to his. That night he seduced me. I regard this as a good experience—I was a willing participant, pleased at last to discover that there was a whole

every month when he had to attend a conference committee meeting on a Sunday, and I went to the big public library and looked up everything I could find on homosexuality. There was not much available in 1955—mostly accounts by shrinks of men who had come to them with "homosexual problems", often called as I remember "inversion." Pretty depressing, but I read some of them several times—I felt a kinship with those men. (I am not sure what my parents thought I was doing in the library. Certainly they had no idea of my real interest.)

In my last couple of years in high school I had a friendship that unexpectedly developed into a sexual relationship—I would say that it was experimental rather than romantic. We did a lot of bushwalking together, and somehow often ended up naked in the grass. He too went on to marry later.

I was still pretty naive and isolated—there was not yet any gay movement of course, especially in Australia. There were not yet any gay bars, even in Brisbane—not that I would have gone to one! However, after I moved to Brisbane to go to university I gradually discovered that my kind met in certain parks and other

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I felt great confusion and guilt.

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indoor locations known as "beats," and I gradually spent more and more time "cruising" there. At the same time, I had become personally much more involved in church, and I now for the first time started to feel guilt about my feelings and behavior. I cannot put my finger on where that guilt came from—I guess it was all around me in society. It may have also come from the fact that I was dating women because that was expected, and these seemed to be attracted to me. I realized that I saw them as friends, not romantic objects, that there was no sexual attraction at all. Although I could hide behind my high morals—sex before marriage was not expected in Adventist circles, especially from a fellow so active in church—there was no doubt that I felt great confusion and guilt. Through these years I never had a gay friend—once I had sex with a guy, he knew my shame, so I was totally embarrassed should I see him again. I remember forming close bonds with straight friends and then feeling intense loneliness as they developed romantic relationships with girls. Because no one knew my secret, and this included my family, no one knew the real me.

Eventually the tension became so great that I yearned to be able to "change." I knew instinctively that I should not talk with a pastor about my "problem", so instead went to the head of the counseling service at the university. This was early in my time in grad

school. I don't think he was judgmental—his main comment was an expression of amazement that I was doing so well academically while finding the time to do all that cruising. Since I wanted to change, he offered me the "best" tool available to psychologists then—aversion therapy. This involved showing me slides of "dirty pictures," and giving me a small electric shock when the picture was gay but allowing me to enjoy a straight photo without interruption. Needless to say, this did not make me straight! Indeed, it caused so much turmoil that I cruised much more frequently during that time. My religious training led me to reject the method—I felt I should be able to "choose" the right path rather than have my psyche manipulated into it. After six turbulent weeks I broke an appointment and did not return—and then realized what a relief this was.

I was not yet admitting to myself that I was gay—this was something that I did, not what I was. However, as my work in grad school progressed I realized more and more acutely that I was romantically attached to my best friend, who was of course straight. He, his girlfriend, and I often did things together (weirdly, she always sat in the back seat of my car—Greg did not have one), and the two of us spent a great deal of time together both on campus and at church. There were many mixed feelings here—joy, frustration, jealousy. Eventually, after we both graduated, Greg and I spent a year traveling overland (as much as possible) from Australia through Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe to Scandinavia, where I received word that I had a post-doc at Columbia U in NYC, and had to leave him abruptly to meet the deadline. I remember sitting outside on the ferry from Lund to Copenhagen, crying my eyes out.

In NYC I initially repeated my Australian pattern—dating girls and having sex with strange men. This was 1971, the gay movement was new and a bit overwhelming initially to me—too sudden.

In 1974 I helped out a friend at church, a student living in the dorm at Columbia U, by putting up a visiting

former classmate of his in my apartment. Even though he talked a lot about his girlfriend at Stanford, there was so much electricity between us that he looped back to New York on his Eastern tour, and when I returned home there he was awaiting me in my bed! Suddenly I was in love, sure at last that I was gay, and so proud of everything that I told my church group at Columbia U about it in a sermon some weeks later. The commuter relationship did not last, but I was finally out of the closet.

The next year I got mad about some academic put-downs of the new gay researchers at the convention of the American Sociological Association, put up notices calling a meeting of the "Sociologists Gay Caucus" in my hotel room, which overflowed, and I was elected the first president. A year later I argued with the incoming president of ASA after the business meeting, demanding that a session on homosexuality be included in the program the following year, only to be told after five minutes or so that the conversation was coming out all over the ballroom through the speakers. That was how I came out in my

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Suddenly I was in love, sure at last that I was gay ... I was finally out ...

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profession—another step. (There are now several sessions devoted to us each year at the ASA meeting.)

When my chair at Hunter College, where I was teaching—a conservative man whom I liked but who I felt I could not trust with my news of being a gay activist in the profession—retired and was replaced by a black radical, I

See "History" on page 8

decided it was now time to complete the coming out process at work. But he turned out to be a closet case who was threatened by my openness, and he then made sure that I would not be reappointed for the next year (I was not yet tenured, so on a yearly contract). But it all worked out after some months of acute anxiety—I found a new job, with a promotion to Associate professor, at Queens College—and what could be more appropriate for me? At QC I later discovered that the chair who hired me was gay, so my orientation disappeared as an issue. I feel so comfortable that I regularly come out to my classes at their first meeting—I remember how important it could have been for me to have had a role model when I was in college.

In 1980 I was heavily involved in arranging the speakers at the first Kinship Kampmeeting. I guess that was my coming out to the denominational leaders, because it required scary phone calls to people I had not yet met inviting them to speak, a meeting with a GC Vice President, and finally phone calls to Neal Wilson, the GC President then. Finally, after I felt increasingly good about what I was doing in Kinship, I was finally able to come out to my parents. If I had told them about it early in my life, it would probably have been in the context of "I have this problem," and I

would only have brought them grief because they would not have known what to do. I felt it was really good that I could do it in terms of "I have been doing some really exciting stuff in the church, where I am sure God is leading, and I want to tell you all about it." They took a while to digest that mouthful, but when in 1989 I took my partner, Scott Wager, home with me for the first time, they really liked him, and

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*In 1980 I was heavily involved
in arranging the speakers at
the first Kinship Kampmeeting.*

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after a few days Dad got us all together, told Scott how much he and Mum liked him, and welcomed him to the family. It was one of the best moments of my life. For me, coming out was a long process. A couple of years ago my nephew came out to me—he is very glad to have a gay uncle. ▼

Editor's Corner

BY WALT ELIAS

In this issue we feature the "stories" of several of our members. Most of us are moved by such stories, and some deeply so. Each of us has our own take on being gay. With very few exceptions it has not been an easy path.

As we look around us, we observe incredible diversity within the gay community. This diversity, and our willingness to accept it often results in the religious right rushing in to cause problems. They are quick to point out the more extreme elements of our community and present them as our normal way of life. Attendance at a large gay pride festival should illustrate this diversity well.

Perhaps in part because of our conservative upbringing, it can be tempting to judge others because their path is not as "moral" as our own, or at least we do not perceive it that way. We need to remember that for each of us being gay is a journey, and we will probably change our own perspectives over time. Most of us can think of things that were inappropriate to us many years ago that we now consider perfectly fine. The very thing that we may find so offensive at our current place in life may become our favorite thing to do at some point in the future.

Some of us may not, for example, like drag queens, and may indeed be embarrassed by them. However, we hopefully will at least respectfully coexist with them, and perhaps even learn to enjoy their peculiar form of humor.

Our "take" on life doesn't have to be the same as the next person for us to be able to learn from their experiences. We need to listen carefully to their stories and understand their struggles. Each of our lives is greatly enriched by considering the lives of others, different though they may be from our own.

▼

gay man who lived in Oakhurst and he introduced us to several other gay and lesbian members of our community. We became active in the PFLAG chapter and both David and I served on the board for a couple of years.

Meanwhile, our friend the church organist decided to retire and asked if I would consider applying for the paid position. I agreed to meet with the church personnel committee, but told myself that if they asked about my sexual orientation, I would tell them that if it mattered I didn't care to work for the church. They didn't ask and I was hired as both organist and choir director. The church - a nondenominational Christian church - was founded nearly 40 years ago when the community was too small to support separate churches for a variety of denominations. I had never directed a choir before and wasn't certain I could do it. Apparently the congregation liked my work, though, because after I'd been there about 6 months they agreed to purchase a new three manual digital organ which is the largest and best in the community. (That distinction had previ-

ously belonged to the local SDA church).

I occasionally attended the SDA church with my mother but was never asked to play or even to try their very fine instrument. The organ sales representative who handled installation of Community Church's new organ told me that he had had a conversation with one of the SDA church organists in which she had said "It's a shame we can't ask Lee to play for us, but you know ... his (ahem) life-style". She then proceeded to invite the sales rep to come and play for them. Later, at the dedication of our church's new organ, I was pleased to introduce the SDA organist to the organ representative's partner, John!

A few weeks after I began working at Community Church, Pastor Redmond called me aside and said "Lee, I want to let you know that next Sunday I'm going to be preaching on homosexuality. Several members of the congregation have asked me to do so, but I'm not sure they're ready for what I'm going to say". (Remember Pastor Redmond - the "red-necked fundamentalist preacher"?). It turned out that I had been very wrong about him. He has a very inclusive theology and numbers

several gay people among his close friends. Later, we learned that Pastor Redmond grew up a Roman Catholic and converted to Protestantism while he was in the service. The catalyst for his conversion was a Seventh-day Adventist. However, he did not become an SDA. Instead became a minister in the Disciples of Christ Church.

Several months later, I invited Pastor Redmond to speak at a monthly PFLAG meeting. In addition to Pastor Redmond and his wife, the Associate Pastor and the Chairman of the church board also attended the PFLAG meeting with their wives. When I introduced Pastor Redmond to the group, I recounted the story of my first impression and the fact that I had resolved not to work for the church if asked about my sexual orientation. The chairman of the church board spoke up at that point and said "they didn't have to ask you, Lee. I'd already told them you were gay."

Shortly after that meeting, Pastor Redmond announced his retirement and a

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Kinship Kookers

Winter Vegetable Stew

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 oz. dried porcini mushrooms | 4 oz. portobello mushrooms, sliced |
| 3/4 cup boiling vegetable stock | 4 oz. shitake mushrooms, sliced |
| 3 Tbs. olive oil | 1/2 cup dry red wine or vegetable stock |
| 4 cloves garlic, minced | 2 Tbs. chopped fresh rosemary, or 2 tsp. dried |
| 1 large red onion or leek, chopped | 1 strip orange peel, 1 inch wide by 3 inches long |
| 3 med. carrots, cut into 1 inch pieces | Salt and pepper to taste |
| 1 celery root, peeled and cut into 1 inch cubes | 1/2 cup chopped toasted pecans |
| 10 oz. white button mushrooms, quartered | 2 Tbs. chopped fresh parsley for garnish |

In a small bowl combine dried mushrooms and boiling stock. Let soak until mushrooms are softened, about 20 min. Strain liquid through sieve into another small bowl and set aside. Coarsely chop mushrooms. In a large pot, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil over med. heat. Add garlic, onion or leek, carrots and celery root and cook, stirring often, until vegetables begin to soften, 10 min. Add dried and fresh mushrooms. Cook, stirring often, until mushrooms are tender, about 10 min. Stir in reserved mushroom liquid, red wine or stock, rosemary and orange peel and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer, partially covered, for 15 min. Season with salt and pepper. Stir in pecans and garnish with chopped parsley.

Serves 8

COMMENTS: The above recipe is from Vegetarian Times, February, 1998.

Contributed by Hal Jobe

One of the most treasured parts of Kampmeeting is the "stories"

It all started at La Sierra!

BY JAN RADCLYFFE

Jan is a long time
contributor to
KinNet.

The first person I ever truly fell in love with was a Catholic woman, whom I met in college — at La Sierra. She was from New York and had heard that Loma Linda had a good medical school. Since La Sierra was, at that time, Loma Linda's undergraduate school, she attended La Sierra until being accepted into Loma Linda. After she graduated and finished her internship (three years after I had graduated and begun my teaching career), we got an apartment together. Although we were lovers in every sense of the word, we had both been raised in such strict homophobic religions, that we never admitted we were lesbians ... we told ourselves we were two people who fell in love with each other — and both just happened to be female! (It was easier to admit that I loved "a woman", than to admit that I loved "women" — and therefore loved her *because* she was a woman.) We told other people we were roommates and best friends, which were both true. We lived far enough away from both of our jobs that no one really had a clue about our private life. We weren't living openly as lesbians — we didn't go to bars (straight or gay) or even find a support group. We just worked, attended concerts, went to the beach, flew kites, took trips together, and totally enjoyed being in love with each other. She quite often attended church with me on Sabbath morning, and I often attended mass with her on Sunday morning.

Until one day three and a half years later, a co-worker of hers arranged a blind date for her, with a friend her husband worked with in the Army. He was really nice, and Kari quickly fell in love with him. It was painful enough when she would go out with him and come home and tell me all the intimate details, but at least she was still sharing intimacy with me. Later on, he began spending weekends at our apartment, and I got to listen to them making love in the room next to mine. <couch!> People are expected to cry at weddings, so no one suspected that the tears in her maid of

honor's eyes were a mixture of "happy for her because she's so happy" tears and "my heart is broken" tears.

Before they were married, he set up a blind date for me with another guy in the Army, who was a Baptist. We dated for over two years and had a lot of fun. I admired him for having high moral standards; even though we were in our late twenties, he never tried to get me to have sex with

.....
*I cried myself to sleep on
my wedding night ... —
because it was so disap-
pointing.*
.....

him. (That's probably why I liked him enough to go out with him for so long.) Then he was sent to the Philippines for a year; before he left, he told me not to sit around waiting for him. He said he had a lot of "personal issues" (such as his religion) that he had to resolve within himself, before he'd be ready for a serious relationship with anyone.

After he left, I met a nice SDA man at an Adventist Singles retreat. He had just gotten a new job in another state, so we "dated" by letter and by phone and saw each other about once every six months—which made the relationship always seem new and exciting. I guess I allowed myself to fall in love with the idea that he loved and cared for me. When he asked me to marry him, I was 32 years old and figured this was God's answer to my prayers. [After all, we were taught that if we asked God to take away "unnatural desires," S/He would do so.] I cried myself to sleep on my wedding night (long after he had rolled over and gone to sleep) — because it was *so* disappointing.

The incredible sense of oneness I had known with a woman simply wasn't there with my husband, for whom I had just left a wonderful job and lifelong friends I loved — to move halfway across the country for a marriage that should never have taken place.

I tried for several years to make it work and to live up to the vows I had taken. I still hadn't come out (even to myself), so I couldn't really identify the emptiness I felt inside. While I was teaching grades 4–6 in a self-contained class of 30 students at the SDA school (with no teacher's aides and no conference period), I was too busy and exhausted to do more than merely survive. I didn't think I could live through a third year of that, so I resigned and began substitute teaching. With no papers to grade and no lesson plans to write, I had a lot of time on my hands when my husband worked overtime / took night classes / went away on frequent business trips.

We had just bought a VCR, so I rented a lot of movies. It was when I watched "Personal Best" that a light went on inside my head. In case you haven't seen it: It's about two female athletes training for the Olympics, who fall in love and begin a long-term relationship. Of course, at that time filmmakers thought they could only make a movie about lesbians if one becomes straight or kills herself at the end, so in "Personal Best" one of them falls in love with a guy. (I could really identify with the OTHER one's feelings!) At the end of the movie, the two of them are on the victory stand together, and the boyfriend is standing nearby, cheering. His girlfriend whispers to her former lover, to ask what she thinks of him. When Tory whispers back, "He's kinda cute — for a guy!", it dawned on me that she DIDN'T automatically assume that she, too, now had to find a guy.

I knew I'd been aroused by watching the love scene and all the female athletes' bodies, but it wasn't until that closing scene that I realized, "I'm a lesbian, just like Tory!" That felt both liberating and terrifying at the same time. It felt good to finally be able to admit the truth to myself, after all those

years of living in denial. But I also felt like it would cost me my salvation, as well as my marriage, if I acted upon my newfound identity. However, I needed to find others like myself. It took awhile, but I eventually found a group of lesbian friends. (My husband thought I had joined a "feminist" group.) One of them took me to a lesbian bar and asked, "Did you ever think there'd be this many queers in Minnesota?" She also showed me the "Gay & Lesbian Studies" section in a big bookstore downtown. Through a listing in *Gayellow Pages* (and an ad in *MS. Magazine*), I learned of the existence of Kinship. I rented a P.O. box and began receiving their materials. It was a great relief to realize that nowhere in the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy is there a mention — let alone a condemnation — of homosexuality as one's natural orientation. After a lot of prayer and soul-searching, I realized it wasn't fair to my husband, or to myself, to continue in the marriage. When I left him, I told him he deserved someone who could love him in return, as much as he loved her. I never told him — or anyone in the church — that I was gay. [I know I hurt him a lot, so I was really happy for him when I heard he had remarried; they now have two children.]

By the way, I recently "ran into" the Baptist guy I had dated for a couple of years — at the Saturday-night-before-Halloween block party in the gay section of a nearby city. Dan, a Kinship buddy, and I were sitting in a sandwich shop; just as I leaned down to take a bite, I heard someone say hi to Dan. When Dan replied, "Hi, Bill," I looked up and saw HIM — the guy who was so much fun to date, because he never tried to pressure me into having sex with him. Dan saw us staring at each other and stammering, so he asked if we knew each other. When we told him we had dated for awhile, Dan said, "Well, that's cool — because you're gay and she's a lesbian!" (It was the first — and the *only* pleasant — time I've been outed!!)

I wish I could say I'm now living my fairy tale's "happily ever after" ending, but I'm not sure if there is such

a thing here on earth. When I requested my membership transferred here to Texas, the church board in Minnesota voted not to send it. Instead, they said the Holy Spirit had told them I was no longer a "member in good and regular standing," and my name was removed from the church books. To someone who had attended Sabbath School from birth, had gone to SDA schools from first grade through college, and then had taught in church schools for twelve years and had led the Primary Sabbath School division for three years, that was like having the rug pulled right out from under me. I felt like they were taking my name out of that big book in heaven — you know, the one they taught us we have to make sure our name is written in, by "living right"!?

Since then, I've come to be very thankful for the fact that God will be the only judge of who will and who won't be in heaven. I've long believed that, although they have the most biblically-based major doctrines [I still believe in the Sabbath, the second coming, death being like sleep, etc.], Adventists will NOT be the only ones there. They've added too many nit-picky rules — and they seem to delight in making a person feel that breaking one of them will keep you out of heaven. A lot of what's done in the name of the church is not only uncaring, but downright unchristian — and I think there will be consequences for those who have been responsible for the lives of others.

Despite the church's official opinion, there are two things I've always been — and always will be: a Seventh-day Adventist and a lesbian! God doesn't expect me to try to be something I'm not, nor does S/He say I "can't be" something I believe in. Even though I'm not able to be "out" at work — without risking being out OF work — I'm no longer lying to myself, and that's a giant burden lifted off of me. Only God knows what Her/His plan is for the rest of my life. I've learned to say, "Thy will be done" and accept it — one day at a time! ▼

pastoral search committee was formed. I was concerned that a new pastor might not share Pastor Redmond's inclusive attitudes. So I spoke to the Chairman of the church board and asked whether he had considered the fact that with a new pastor coming, the church might also have to find a new organist/choir director. He laughed and said "That's not a concern, Lee. We're telling every candidate that we have a gay music director. We also tell them that they can accept the job or not but our music director and his partner are staying in the church." David and I have been full fledged members of Community Church for about four years now. David has served two terms on the church board and is currently working in the paid position of Church Secretary.

Obviously, the church has become the focal point of our lives in the community. However, we have also developed some close friendships outside the church. One circle of friends is quite interesting in that it includes David and me, another gay couple and two straight couples. When this group gets together there are occasional comments which acknowledge awareness of our relationships, but on the whole sexual orientation is not an issue - we are simply a group of eight friends having a pleasant social afternoon or evening.

This past December, our home was selected by The Mountain Community Women's Club to be on their annual Holiday Open House Tour. About 150 people bought tickets and toured our home. One woman who was touring asked me about my wife. I replied without hesitation that I don't have a wife, but I do have a partner named David. (David was working on the day of the open house.) I overheard another woman saying to her friend "Doesn't this home remind you of Roger and Kevin's home? — the one in Palm Springs, not their other home!"

One might conclude from my story thus far that David and I have stumbled into a perfect community where homophobia is nonexistent. Not entirely true. A lesbian couple approached our current pastor and asked if they could have a Commitment Service. After some deliberation, it was decided that the retired

Associate Pastor would perform the ceremony. It was a beautiful garden service with one of the women in white satin and the other in a tuxedo. The current pastor served communion and Pastor Redmond and his wife were among the guests.

"The Wedding" became the talk of the entire village and Community Church became known in some circles as the "Dark Church". Even within the congregation there were some who appeared to have been comfortable with David and me who were unhappy about "The Wedding". One couple left the church after a vain attempt to lecture the pastor about the evil of homosexuality. Another couple stopped attending church about the same time and the wife commented that she couldn't bear to sit in church and watch "that homosexual" play the organ every Sunday.

Several weeks later, a new member approached me after a Sunday service with some questions about the organ. After we had visited for a few minutes, he said "Lee, I've just heard that our pastor recently performed a marriage for two women. Is that true?" I replied "no, it isn't true, but he did serve communion at a commitment service for two women". The new member then said "don't you know that what they are doing is an abomination?" I responded by asking him what material his shirt was made of. He acknowledged what I could already see that it was a polyester blend. I said "Norman, according to Leviticus 19:19, your shirt is an abomination, and I have to tell you that I am a gay man and that the tall man talking with the pastor is my partner." Norman apologized profusely and said "If I had known, I wouldn't have said anything to you." I replied that I would prefer he talked to me rather than about me. The next morning, Norman and the Pastor had a long visit and after that

Norman was almost always the first person to come up and shake my hand during the Sacrament of Greeting.

Come September, it will be six years since David and I moved to our village. It has been a most interesting adventure. We've formed many good friendships and educated quite a few people about gay/lesbian issues. In conclusion, I'll relate two examples of the effect our lives have had on the church and our community.

First, when Dr. Gene Swanson, our current Pastor was recently interviewed for a full-page article in the newspaper, he was asked about the fact that his church has been labeled "gay" by some in the community. Pastor Swanson's response: "I don't think we are a **gay** church anymore than we are a **divorce** church, or a **recovering** church or a **sinner's** church." "Yes we have gay people. Yes we have divorced people. And yes, all of us is identified as a sinner. Enough said."

The last involves a young man from our community whom we met at a PFLAG meeting. He shared that he had grown up in the Disciples of Christ Church with a very strong religious faith. He had not attended church for several years since coming to the realization that he is gay. We were happy to tell him that not only was he welcome at our church, but that the Pastor was ordained in the Disciples Church. John was in church the very next Sunday, joined the choir and regularly shared his considerable musical talents before he moved away. During the time John was in our congregation, I once said to him "if Jesus were to visit Oakhurst, I think he would choose to come to Community Church." John replied that he did not agree with me. When I asked why, he said "Jesus wouldn't come to our church because he's already here!" ▼

Kinship Events

For further information contact the appropriate regional coordinator on page 2.

April 11: Region 9. Easter Party. Altadena.

April 18: Region 8. Meeting. Pine Grove.

May 9: Region 9. Meeting.

May 23: Region 8. Meeting. Milpitas.

June 14-21 Kinship Kampmeeting. Minneapolis.

June 28: Region 8. Gay Pride. San Francisco.

Kinship Operating Account Statement

Fund Name	Beginning 01/01/98	Income	Expense	Transfers	Ending 03/31/98
General Fund	10,037.47	4,283.24	(2,236.00)	(7,500.00)	4,584.71
Program Funds					
Connection	2,292.03	1,110.00	(1,253.62)	0.00	2,148.41
Kampmeeting 98	(2,100.00)	1,695.00	0.00	0.00	(405.00)
K'mtg Scholarships	639.70	40.00	0.00	0.00	679.70
Project Funds					
Advertising: General	185.32	0.00	0.00	0.00	185.32
Advertising: Women's	48.74	0.00	0.00	0.00	48.74
Clergy Packet 96	(468.18)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(468.18)
Kid's Stuff	280.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	280.00
Member Wellness	5,598.67	310.00	0.00	0.00	5,908.67
Womyn's Newsletter	2,002.09	401.00	(410.75)	0.00	1,992.34
Regional Funds					
01-North Atlantic	145.72	0.00	0.00	0.00	145.72
02-Mid Atlantic	122.29	0.00	0.00	0.00	122.29
03-South Atlantic	197.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	197.50
04-Great Lakes	50.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	50.00
05-Great Plains	230.97	0.00	0.00	0.00	230.97
06-Rocky Mountain	163.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	163.87
07-Pacific Northwest	143.58	0.00	0.00	0.00	143.58
08-Central Pacific	338.12	5.00	0.00	0.00	343.12
09-Southwest US	1,318.27	5.00	0.00	0.00	1,323.27
10-Kinship Canada	45.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	45.00
Totals	\$21,271.16	\$7,849.24	(\$3,900.37)	(\$7,500.00)	\$17,720.03

Kinship Endowment Account Statement

Restricted Investments	Beginning 01/01/98	Deposits	Transfers / Adjustments	Expense / Disbursed	Ending 03/31/98
Asset Allocation					
Bank America Savings	766.91	2.48	(468.21)	0.00	301.18
Fidelity Brokerage	37,573.08	309.31	5,194.86	(28.95)	43,048.30
Time Deposits	23,440.93	7,786.74	465.73	0.00	31,693.40
Total	\$61,780.92	\$8,098.53	\$5,192.38	(\$28.95)	\$75,042.88

Notes:

1. (Brackets) denote a subtracted amount or negative balance.

REGISTRATION FORM

19th Annual S.D.A. KINSHIP KAMPMEETING

1998

June 14 - 21
Mount Olivet
Retreat Center
Farmington, MN

Transportation can be provided
from Minneapolis - St. Paul
International airport for a
suggested
donation of \$10

Payment plans as well as a limited
number of scholarships are
available. Please call or write for
information.

Flight Information

Arrival date _____
Time _____
Airline _____
Flight _____

Complete this form and mail
with payment to:

SDA Kinship
PO Box 7320
Laguna Niguel, CA, 92607
USA
(714) 248-1299

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Country _____ Phone _____

Preferred roommate (must complete separate registration form). Please use two forms.

☐ Entire week ☐ Sun ☐ Mon ☐ Tue ☐ Wed ☐ Thur ☐ Fri ☐ Sat *Check as appropriate* ←

A. Double or Triple occupancy (per person)
\$450.00 entire week or \$75.00 daily rate \$ _____
(These are only 18 of these rooms.)

B. Single occupancy (per person)
\$895.00 entire week or \$135.00 daily rate \$ _____

C. Dormitory rooms (per person)
\$375.00 entire week or \$60.00 daily rate \$ _____

D. Airport transport \$10.00 \$ _____

E. T-Shirt \$15.00 \$ _____

F. My donation to help the scholarship fund \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Down payment (\$50 min) \$ _____

Balance due by May 15th. \$ _____

- ☐ Check enclosed (made out to SDA Kinship)
☐ Please charge my Mastercard or Visa

Amount authorized to be charged \$ _____

Card # _____ - _____ - _____ - _____

Card expiration date _____

Signature _____

Confirmation will be sent to persons registering by May 15, 1998. Pre-payment of Kampmeeting fees is appreciated since Kinship has to pre-pay the facility. Rooms are assigned on a first come first serve basis. Amounts quoted are in US currency. Those individuals staying in the double occupancy rooms will be moved on Friday nite due to the slumber party sheduled for that night.